

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4118

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AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3489

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 3)

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH VS

SUBJECT:VIETNAM RESEARCH REACTOR SECURITY

REF: A. STATE 031164

B. STATE 062177

C. STATE 065363

D. STATE 066714

E. SAIGON 3267

F. SAIGON 3311

1. ALTHOUGH SECURITY SITUATION IN DALAT IS STABLE AT THIS TIME THIS PICTURE COULD CHANGE RAPIDLY IN VIEW INTENSITY CURRENT NVA OFFENSIVE. THEREFORE, EMBASSY AGREES WITH DECISION TO TAKE STEPS TOWARD REMOVAL OF FUEL ELEMENTS FROM DALAT REACTOR. FSO JAY BLOWERS, POLITICAL/MILITARY OFFICER, WILL SERVE AS COORDINATOR FOR PROJECT.

2. PROFESSOR NGO DINH LONG, DIRECTOR OF DALAT REACTOR, VISITED EMBASSY MARCH 25 TO DISCUSS REMOVAL OF FUEL RODS. HE CONCURRED IN USE OF US TECHNICIANS AND AIRCRAFT AS ONLY WAY TO ACCOMPLISH TASK ON TIMELY BASIS.

3. MINISTER OF EDUCATION, WHO HAS AUTHORITY OVER DALAT REACTOR, CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED LONGS'S RECOMMENDATION RE REMOVAL OF

FUEL BY US AIRCRAFT. QUESTION OF WHETHER FUEL WOULD BE STORED IN VIET-NAM OR IN UNITED STATES AFTER REMOVAL WAS RAISED. WHATEVER THE LOCATION WE SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT FUEL ELEMENTS BEING STORED ON BEHALF OF GVN.

4. THERE ARE 67 RODS TO BE REMOVED. LONG ESTIMATES THAT RADIATION LEVEL WILL BE LOW BECAUSE REACTOR HAS BEEN COOL FOR LONG PERIOD OF TIME. HOWEVER, DALAT'S RADIATION MONITORING INSTRUMENTS ARE OLD AND TECHNICIANS SHOULD BRING MONITORING EQUIPMENT. LONG DOES NOT BELIEVE PROTECTIVE CLOTHING WILL BE NECESSARY.

5. WITH RESPECT TO TIMING, WE RECOMMEND THAT SURVEY TEAM PROCEED IMMEDIATELY AND THAT AIRCRAFT WITH SHIPPING CASKS BE STAGED AT CLARK AFB, RP, OR TSN RATHER THAN SAN DIEGO SO THAT DELAYS CAN BE MINIMIZED. CAM LY AIRPORT IN DALAT IS VERY NEAR TO REACTOR SITE AND C130 AIRCRAFT CAN LAND ON THIS STRIP.

6. OPERATION SHOULD BE PLANNED SO THAT ON-THE-GROUND TIME FOR AIRCRAFT IN DALAT IS ABSOLUTELY MINIMAL IN ORDER TO REDUCE RUMORS AND SPECULATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

7. UTMOST DISCRETION SHOULD BE OBSERVED. WE SHOULD HOWEVER BE PREPARED TO ANSWER INQUIRIES. BEST WAY MIGHT BE TO SAY THAT REACTOR HAS BEEN INACTIVE FOR SOME TIME AND THAT IN ANY EVENT FUEL ELEMENTS MUST BE REMOVED PERIODICALLY FROM SUCH REACTORS FOR INSPECTION. FOLLOWING INSPECTION THEY WILL BE TEMPORARILY STORED IN THE UNITED STATES ON BEHALF OF GVN.
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